



# United States Department of the Interior

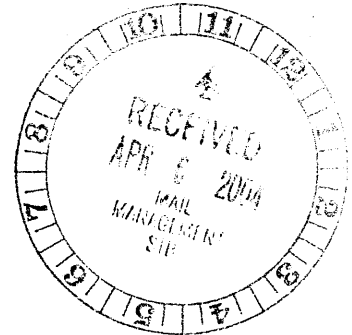
## FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Marion Illinois Suboffice (ES)

8588 Route 148

Marion, IL 62959

(618) 997-3344



March 29, 2004

Ms. Jo Carole Dawkins  
Dawkins Environmental Consulting  
P. O. Box 845  
Springville, Alabama 35146

Dear Ms. Dawkins:

This is in reference to a March 12, 2004, letter from the Surface Transportation Board requesting comments from the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) pertaining to the proposed construction of a new 13-mile rail line in Montgomery County, Illinois, by Ameren Energy Generating Company (AEGC). The proposed line would connect AEGC's Coffeen Power Plant with existing rail lines of the Burlington Northern, Santa Fe Railway, and Union Pacific Railroad. These comments are provided under the authority of and in accordance with the provisions of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.); and the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.

To facilitate compliance with Section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, Federal agencies are required to obtain from the Service information concerning any species, listed or proposed to be listed, which may be present in the area of a proposed action. Therefore, we are furnishing you the following list of species which have ranges that include the project area.

<u>Classification</u>	<u>Common Name (Scientific Name)</u>	<u>Habitat</u>
Endangered	Indiana bat ( <i>Myotis sodalis</i> )	Caves, mines; small stream corridors with well developed riparian woods; upland and bottomland forest

There is no designated critical habitat in the project area at this time.

The endangered Indiana bat is listed as occurring in several Illinois counties. Indiana bats

migrate seasonally between winter hibernacula and summer roosting habitats. Winter hibernacula include caves and abandoned mines. Females emerge from hibernation in late March or early April to migrate to summer roosts. Females form nursery colonies under the loose bark of trees (dead or alive) and/or cavities, where each female gives birth to a single young in June or early July. A maternity colony may include from one to 100 individuals. A single colony may utilize a number of roost trees during the summer, typically a primary roost tree and several alternates. Some males remain in the area near the winter hibernacula during the summer months, but others disperse throughout the range of the species and roost individually or in small numbers in the same types of trees as females. The species or size of trees does not appear to influence whether Indiana bats utilize a tree for roosting provided the appropriate bark structure is present. However, the use of a particular tree does appear to be influenced by weather conditions, such as temperature and precipitation.

During the summer, the Indiana bat frequents the corridors of small streams with well-developed riparian woods, as well as mature lowland and upland forests. It forages for insects along stream corridors, within the canopy of floodplain and upland forests, over clearings with early successional vegetation (old fields), along the borders of crop lands, along wooded fence rows, over farm ponds and in pastures. It has been shown that the foraging range for the bats varies by season, age, and sex and ranges up to 81 acres (33 ha). To avoid impacting this species, tree clearing activities should not occur during the period of April 1 to September 30. If it is necessary to clear trees during this time frame, mist net surveys may be necessary to determine if Indiana bats are present.

According to the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) maps several forested wetlands and streams may be impacted by the proposed rail line. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers should be contacted for guidance and an application for a Clean Water Act, Section 404 permit. Efforts should be made to avoid and minimize impacts to wetlands, streams, forests and other wildlife resources.

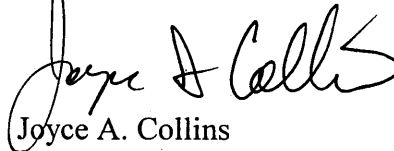
These comments provide technical assistance only and do not constitute the report of the Secretary of the Interior on the project pursuant to Section 2(b) of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, do not fulfill the requirements under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, nor do they represent the review comments of the U.S. Department of the Interior on any forthcoming environmental statement. The Service will make final comments on the proposed construction in regard to threatened and endangered species upon our review of the Environmental Assessment or any other environmental document that may be prepared.

Ms. Jo Carole Dawkins

3

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed rail line. Please contact Mike Thomas of my staff at (618) 997-3344, ext. 345, should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joyce A. Collins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Joyce" and last name "Collins" clearly distinguishable.

Joyce A. Collins  
Assistant Field Supervisor

cc: IDNR (Davis)  
STB (Navecky)